



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

****NEWS RELEASE****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2006-05

Thursday, January 12, 2006

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Burmaster allocates \$1.25 million for high-cost special education aid

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster recently informed school districts that she is setting aside federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) discretionary funding to reimburse Wisconsin schools for services to children with severe disabilities.

“I am again allocating federal discretionary dollars, a total of \$1.25 million, to support my *Keeping the Promise: High-Cost Special Education Aid* program,” Burmaster said. “It is our long-held belief that all children are entitled to a quality education. However, some of our students have severe or multiple disabilities that require very specialized equipment and services that can cost three or more times the average expense of educating a student. This aid will help our schools pay for services for these children.”

This is the third year Burmaster has allocated federal discretionary dollars for the *Keeping the Promise: High-Cost Special Education Aid* program. The aid will reimburse costs incurred during the 2004-05 school year. Burmaster developed the initiative in September 2003 to compensate for a lack of both federal and state funding for special education services required under federal law. Based on data produced during the first two years of the initiative, school districts demonstrated the need for state support for children with severe disabilities. This led to inclusion of a high-cost special education aid package in the 2005-07 biennial budget.

“The discretionary federal money I am directing to high-cost special education aid will provide immediate help to school districts that lack sufficient state or federal special education funding to serve their students with disabilities,” Burmaster said.

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Eligible costs under the *Keeping the Promise* program include all costs (except administration or leadership) related to educating a student with high-cost special education needs in the 2004-05 school year. Reimbursement from IDEA flow-through funds, Medicaid, and state special education categorical aids are deducted first. *Keeping the Promise* aid is then calculated at 90 percent of the amount by which the total cost after deductions to provide special education and related services to an individual child exceeds \$30,000. School districts have until Feb. 24 to make claims for costs incurred in the 2004-05 school year. Reimbursement will be made in June. As in past years, the Department of Public Instruction expects that the number and amount of eligible claims will require that reimbursement be prorated.

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